

After 700 road curves, there's old Mineral King ... your destination or jumping-off place

Allow two hours each way for the Mineral King road, and after the first mile or so you can enjoy the slow driving it requires. Some 700 curves, they say, still lie ahead when you turn from California Highway 198 onto the 26-mile road to Mineral King. On the same road you drive today, you could have driven a brand new 1923 Packard or Pierce-Arrow in the days of heavy cars with long wheelbases, two-wheel brakes, and no power steering; by then the wagon road first built in 1880 had been reconstructed practically to its present condition.

Gentle in its mellowed impact on the steep wooded canyon walls of the Ka-

weah River's east fork but bold in its unflagging ascent to the mining town that is no more, this uncommonly nostalgic motorway is generally wide enough for two cars except where its builders couldn't—or didn't want to—blast down the majestic trees or rocks that occasionally squeeze it into one lane.

This road and this country have been in the news several times in the last few years. Some readers may want to schedule a visit this summer just to see what the controversy is about.

The rapid rise of Western population, especially in California, causes pressure to "open up" more wilderness lands for year-



Sequoias bypassed by loggers appear soon after you enter Sequoia National Park



National park boundary lines are very close to Mineral King on all sides except south

around recreation. At the same time, many Westerners feel a deep concern over the rate at which our remaining wilderness lands are shrinking in area. For details on how Mineral King gets involved in this debate, see page 51.

THE APPROACH: THREE RIVERS TO SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK

The strung-out village of Three Rivers, rendered less attractive by the widening and straightening of State 198 through it, has motels and restaurants, and stores where you can stock up for camping or housekeeping in the Mineral King area. About 3 miles up the highway, the Mineral King road takes off steeply uphill.

As the twisting, sporty drive climbs through the fresh springtime greenery, the sweet pervasive fragrance of blossoming buckeye suddenly gives way to spice as your windshield slaps into the aro-



Mineral King at last. This is about all that remains of downtown. Farewell Gap, in distance at left, is still snowy in June.

ROBERT WENKAM

Most lakes described on pages 48 and 50 are off to the right. To get to Sawtooth Pass, you go from Mineral King out to left

matic dangling leaves of an overhanging bay tree. Blue harvest brodiaea, golden stars, and white, pink, and yellow mariposa lilies sway with the tender grasses that come right up to the narrow asphalt. Soon the East Fork of the Kaweah, more audible than visible in its leafy, bouldery chasm, is below you on your left; the road edges closer to it and finally crosses to the north side, where it stays the rest of the way to Mineral King.

THROUGH THE PARK

You've reached the altitude of 4,000 feet when you stop for the grand panoramic view from Lookout Point, just inside Sequoia National Park. Now high above the river again, you look southwest across its canyon and up the forested sweep of Case Mountain, outside the park boundary. More than 2 miles away, the individual treetops near the crest are outlined with sunlight from above and behind, and

you thrill to the discovery of unmistakable rounded crowns of mature sequoias — uncounted, unnamed, and surely, in their isolation, safe forever from any complement of little signs telling how big they are.

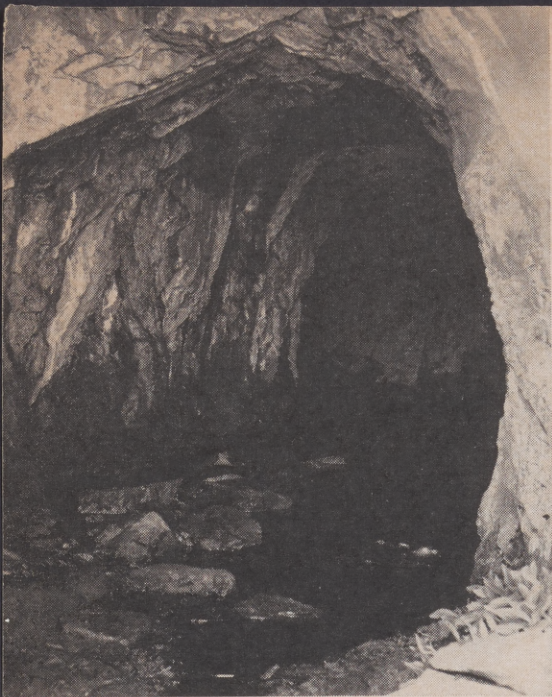
From this point on to Silver City, whenever the road swings out into the open to give you a view to the south beyond the river, you will be able to spot Big Trees on the far slopes, in the swales and ravines, and even silhouetted on ridgetops. No other drive in the realm of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* affords such continuous forest pageantry, or such surprising reassurance that untrammelled quantities of the giants have been saved.

Atwell Mill. After skirting a spectacular granite bluff just beyond Lookout Point, the road continues to wind up and away from the river. You come to the first close-up sequoias, then to the site of old

Atwell Mill, where logging began in 1879. Among the great stumps in the forest openings here, heavy machinery lies rusting in the grass, while blue-green young sequoias, dramatically symmetrical and compact, strive to replace their vanished elders.

Chunks of the dark red wood of felled trees are still lying about, weathered but sound, and the smaller pieces are prime whittling material.

Here is good, secluded camping. North of the road, a beautiful trail to the top of Paradise Ridge meanders easily up through the Skinner Grove of Big Trees, named for the Seattle preservationist who bought it to save it from logging and then donated it to the national park system (the proposed Mineral King highway would go right through it). At this time of year, the grove is flecked with blossoming dogwood and heady with the rich



Black Wolf Mine shaft is one of many in valley. Don't step where you can't see

ROBERT WENKAM



Firs, wood smoke, morning sunlight, and talkative stream all add up to picture of rare tranquility in Mineral King. Rental cabins set among the trees are warm and cozy

GEORGE BALLIS



Father told us he had brought his sons to fish upper East Fork "just one last time"



All the comforts of home—and more—where the East Fork's trout are within casting distance of your table. Under development plans, camping here will be prohibited

Old mines, old
firs, wood smoke,
talkative streams

sweet scent of Western azaleas.

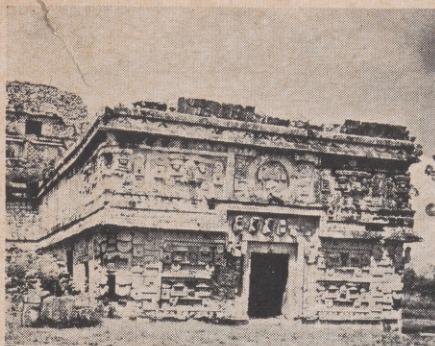
The Atwell-Hockett Trail goes down from the campground and bridges a fine mossy section of the river gorge; a little way up the other side you come to the extensive East Fork Grove of Big Trees.

BEYOND THE PARK

Notched deeply into the south side of

Sequoia National Park is the oddly artificial enclave of national forest land known as the Mineral King Game Refuge. Now the crux of the Mineral King controversy (if it had been in the park, the resort proposal never would have been entertained), this area was excluded when the park was established, because of scattered mineral deposits that once attracted

SUNSET



méxico

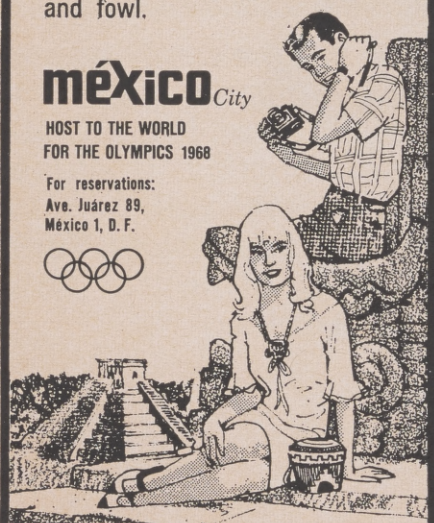
*So foreign...
yet so near*

In Yucatan the spirit of an ancient civilization survives uniquely. Relaxation and tranquility are among its other attractions. Literally scores of precious archeological sites are scattered throughout the Peninsula. Most famous, and within easy reach, are Uxmal and Chichén-Itzá. Both reveal the fabulous opulence of centuries-old Maya culture. Offshore islands, such as Isla Mujeres and Cozumel, are soothing refuges surrounded by crystal-clear waters, the delight of skin-divers, fishermen and yachtsmen. There's good hunting in the jungle, both wild beasts and fowl.

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Fifth Mosquito Lake, highest in the chain, is rimmed with melting snow in early summer

prospectors and miners but have not been worked for the last 30 years.

Almost surrounded by national park land, it contains the headwaters of the East Fork. It is occasionally open to deer and bear hunting, but otherwise it has been functioning, for all practical purposes, as an integral part of Sequoia National Park.

The game refuge embraces small parcels of private land. The first is Silver City, once a busy mining camp but now a rustic colony of summer cabins. A general store and gas station are open from May to September, and sometimes you can rent a cabin that is not being used by its owners. For rental information, write



From Cold Spring area, Hockett Meadows Trail heads west to serene wild country in southern part of Sequoia National Park. Trout are easy to catch here in Evelyn Lake



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Distances are short in this relatively small island democracy and visiting the rich variety of historic sights, ancient monuments, revered shrines dating back to 5th century B.C. and wild life reserves can be done at a leisurely pace. English is spoken by most and even in remote villages there is no problem of verbal communications.

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to H. E. and Katherine Goodan, Silver City, Three Rivers, Calif. 93271.

Beyond Silver City, the road is in poor shape early this summer, while repairs to flood damage are being made, but in another 3 miles you reach the river bank at Faculty Flat. Here are private cabins, a ranger station, and—just across the river—Cold Spring Campground, the last place to camp before you get out of the woods and into the avalanche-cleared openness of the Mineral King valley.

Mineral King village. Though only 7,800 feet high, the valley has a timberline look about it, at a latitude where trees can grow vigorously at 11,000 feet or more. Scan the slopes for the reason: Repeated snowslides have left treeless swaths.

Only a few of Mineral King's buildings have withstood the snows, and most are now used to provide lodging for wayfarers. Seven cabins are outfitted for housekeeping in the wood-stove tradition, and if your youngsters aren't impressed by wood stoves (or the hand-operated gasoline pump outside), they will surely sit up and take notice when bears rattle the garbage can outside the kitchen in the middle of the night. There is "home-made" electricity from 6 to 10 P.M.

Sleeping arrangements are informal: Most families find one cabin big enough. You should bring your own air mattresses and some bedding, so any overflow guests can sleep on the floor. Cabins cost \$6 to \$8 per night, or \$37.50 to \$49.50 per week, depending on size and location. There is even one "honeymoon" cabin, tucked away in the pines only a few feet from a brook that could provide firm wild trout for breakfast any day.

You do not need to cook. The snug Mineral King dining room has some of the best fare you can find in the mountains, served up in hearty quantities by the chef who feeds the packers and guides.

A general store has ice and other supplies.

For lodging information and reservations, write to Mineral King Resort, P.O. Box 98, Three Rivers, Calif. 93271, or phone Mineral King No. 4. Don't let the operator tell you there is no such number.

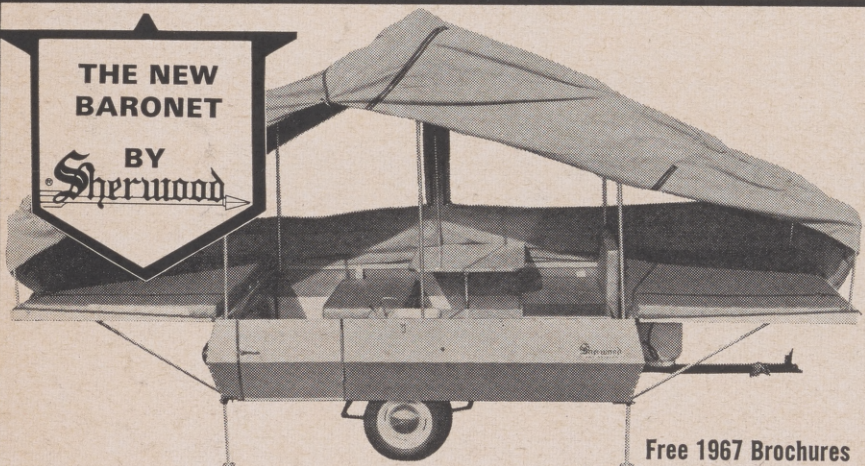
Bill DeCarteret (DeCarteret Pack Trains, P.O. Box 61, Three Rivers, Calif. 93271) will send you a folder on the pack trips you can take from Mineral King into the superlative wilderness beyond the passes in all directions.

Backpacking, you can cover the same country and more (where horses can't walk), but it is not necessary to go outside the basin to enjoy some fine overnight knapsack trips, or some inspiring one-day walks—easy or strenuous—with no load on your back at all.

Eagle Lake. After looking at some of the old mines and perhaps strolling to Aspen Flat, beyond the end of the valley road,

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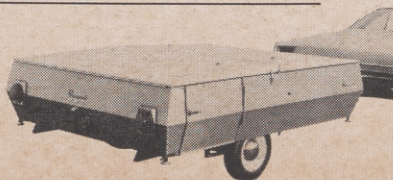
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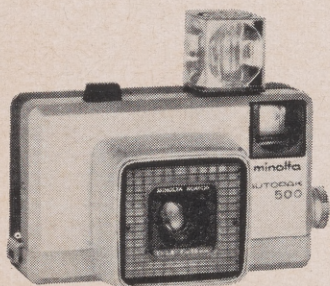


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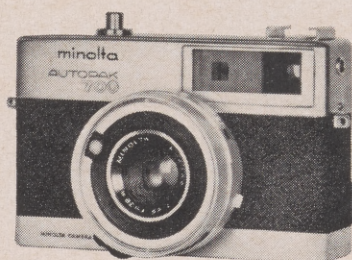
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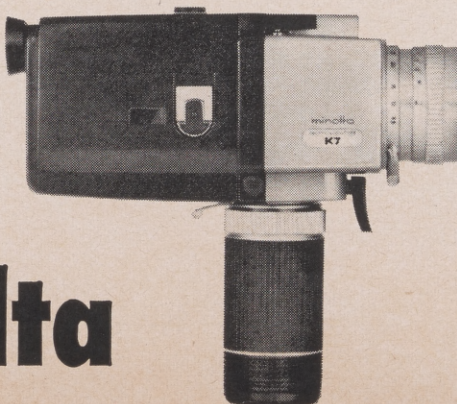


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you will want to see some of the post-glacial lakes in the uppermost basins around Mineral King. Chair lifts are slated to be strung over every major lake basin to terminal restaurants on or near the ridgetops, so you may be seeing and fishing the lakes in their final few unencumbered years.

Eagle Lake, with its snow-streaked granite backdrop, is perhaps the easiest to reach — about a 1½-hour walk from Mineral King, with a gain in elevation of 2,200 feet. Here, as in most of the lakes of the region, brook trout maintain themselves with little or no artificial assistance, but the short feeding season tends to keep them small. Be satisfied if your small spinner or fly brings in fish seven or eight inches long.

Mosquito Lakes. Don't let the name frighten you; it's no more apt here than elsewhere in the mountains in June. For charm and variety of scenery, these five lakes are favorites, and for the angling purist they have the important attribute of self-sustaining trout.

The shortest but roughest approach is by obscure foot trail from Cold Spring Campground; plan on 1½ hours to the first lake. A good horse trail turns off the Eagle Lake trail about a mile below Eagle Lake and crosses a low divide into the Mosquito Lakes basin.

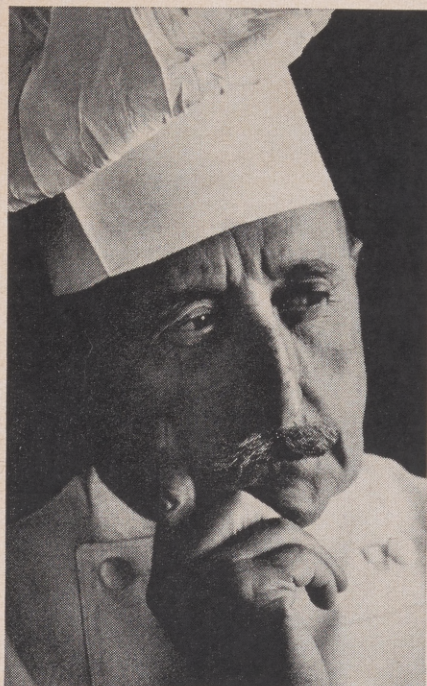
Mineral Lakes. Go to this basin (from Mosquito Lake No. 1) to be alone; there is no trail. Of the five lakes, only the two on Mineral Creek—Gold Lake and Silver Lake—contain trout, but at 12 to 14 inches these are among the largest lake fish in the Mineral King region.

White Chief Lake, in a spectacular cirque at the side instead of the head of its basin, is fishable though small. The last half mile is a breathtaking scramble up the trailless canyonside, but before the trail ends you come to an area of white marble where there are large natural caves and many mines and prospect holes. The lower end of the valley is a shambles of tree trunks brought down by avalanches, and as you climb toward the lake you will see splintered stumps still standing where full-grown firs were snapped off by the sliding snow.

Franklin Lakes. The main Franklin Pass trail passes close to the lower of the two lakes, which is dammed and something of an eyesore. Both lakes contain brook trout which propagate naturally and are wild and sturdy. Allow 2¼ hours to the lower lake, another 15 minutes to the upper, and another ½ hour to Franklin Pass for a view into the upper Kern basin.

Sawtooth Pass. Save this stiff and scenic climax hike for last—after your lungs and legs are conditioned to altitude and rough ground. You head up open slopes toward the sharp pyramid of Sawtooth Peak, the mountain that dominates the skyline

The day Maxim's of Paris went back to the drawing board.



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Our seven-man gourmet committee actually turned down an entree created by *Maxim's of Paris*.

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every time you get a glimpse of the Great Western Divide from the road approaching Mineral King.

After an hour's exposure to the sweeping view of unmarred cirques and crests enclosing the valley, you can turn right to lower Monarch Lake or climb left up the steep dim trail (sometimes hidden under snow in June) to triumph on 11,700-foot Sawtooth Pass. Eastward, enhanced by the foreground accent of glittering Columbine Lake, is the serene wilderness of the upper Kern watershed, with Mount Whitney standing slightly above the array of horizon peaks on the far side.

Mineral King's future: Visitors may crowd it

A grand-scale development plan now under study would transform the Mineral King area. One proposal would provide for a future visitor "load" (summer and winter) more than half as large as that of Yosemite Valley. It would require a new high-traffic road into Mineral King, with about seven miles of it running through Sequoia National Park. Fourteen chair lifts would take winter skiers and summer visitors from Mineral King to the tops of ridges, where some of the area's 10 proposed restaurants would be. This scheme in one form or another has been in the works for several years. At this writing most proposals for Mineral King development are still tentative. On April 20 the State Highway Commission approved an access highway and earmarked funds for it, but the U.S. Department of the Interior hadn't yet granted permission for it to cross Sequoia National Park.

Many conservationists are troubled by the way the Mineral King development idea has grown since it was first proposed in 1949 as a simple 150-bed inn with access over the snow. They are especially concerned about the construction of an access highway through a national park.

The pressure to open up wilderness lands for greater recreation use is rising. The question of whether it will or should result in bringing great crowds of visitors to Mineral King in the next decades is still current and urgent.

So this is a year to visit Mineral King—to see it as it has been, quiet, lonely, wild; and to ponder whether this is the place for tomorrow's visitors to experience a "developed" Sierra.